

THE

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Christian Scheme

FAIRLY STATED,

AND

BRIEFLY VINDICATED:

IN ANSWER TO

A LATE PAMPHLET

CALLED

DEISM

Fairly Stated and Fully Vin-
dicated, &c.

K

QUIS leget HÆC?—NEMO?—*Vel duo vel NEMO.*
Perfius.

L O N D O N :

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The World

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T H E

Christian Scheme

Fairly stated, &c.

THAT the best of Men are still but Men, that no Individual can plead innocent before *the Judge of all the Earth*, will be easily granted.

And that no guilty Person whatever can acquit *himself*, much less *make an Agreement for his Brother*, we may trust the Report of our own Hearts. *Who then shall deliver us from the Body of this Death?* Rom. vii. 24. is the Question. A Question that *Socrates* could never resolve, and remains to this day unanswerable upon every *Scheme* but the *Christian*. St. *Paul* speaks Life to us in the midst of Death, in those exulting Words that follow, *I thank God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*. This is the Ground of our rejoicing; on this Basis we found the Pardon of our Sins, the Security of our Hopes, and an indisputable Title to a glorious Immortality. The manifest Design of the Author of *Deism*

B *fairly*

fairly stated, and fully vindicated from the gross Imputations, and groundless Calumnies of modern Believers, who, it seems, hath weigh'd the Merits of our Cause, and found them even lighter than the Dust in the Balance ; is to undeceive us in a matter of this Consequence, to raze the very Foundation of our boasted Privileges, and substitute in their room such Principles as cannot but render us effectually miserable in this World, and send us out of it in a deplorable State of Uncertainty.

“ Deism, says he, p. 5. properly so called,
 “ whatever ill usage it may have met with,
 “ is no other than the Religion essential to
 “ Man, the true original Religion of Reason
 “ and Nature, such as was believ'd and practis'd by *Socrates* and others of old, who
 “ were as great Ornaments, and did as much
 “ Honour to human Nature, as any Christians ever did.” Nor is it possible, adds he—*satis pro Imperio quisquis es*—“ for
 “ true Religion to be otherwise, whilst God,
 “ who form'd our Faculties, and in their
 “ measure adjusted them to it, continues to
 “ be immutable, and Man continues to be a
 “ rational Being.” That God is an immutable Being, and Man a rational one, are unquestionable Truths ; but that one or the other should make it impossible for true Religion to be any thing but Deism, as above defin'd, is a Conclusion by no means so evident,

dent, as to require no intermediate Proof, but rather so extravagant as to admit of none.

“ Every thing, he goes on, p. 7. enjoin’d
 “ in the Gospel on its Professors to be be-
 “ liev’d, as a rational Doctrine, or practis’d
 “ as a natural Duty, relating to God, our
 “ Neighbours, or ourselves, is a constituent,
 “ an essential Part of Deism, or of true, that
 “ is, natural Religion. Now the single
 “ Question here between Christians and De-
 “ ists, I conceive to be this; namely, whe-
 “ ther the Belief of natural Doctrines, and
 “ the Practice of natural Duties, are all that
 “ is strictly necessary with regard to the Di-
 “ vine Approbation; and consequently hu-
 “ man Happiness, both present and eternal ?”
 For the Solution of which momentous Points
 he has recommended the following Proposi-
 tions to our serious Consideration.

“ 1. Every Duty that indispensably obliges
 “ a Man to the Performance of it, must be
 “ founded on some apparent natural Reason;
 “ for unless there be such a Reason for the
 “ Belief of a Proposition, or performing an
 “ Action, whence arises the Obligation to
 “ either ?” To which I answer, from the
 WILL of him, who lays the Obligation upon
 us.

2. “ The Reason on which the Obligation
 “ to the Discharge of a Duty is founded, ne-
 “ cessarily results from the relation the Per-
 “ son to perform it, stands in to the Party to
 “ whom

"whom it is to be perform'd." Then the relation of a Creature I stand in to God my Creator, is the Reason on which I am oblig'd to perform whatever I know to be his WILL. Consequently, the Belief of natural Doctrines, and the Practice of natural Duties may not be ALL that is strictly necessary with regard to the Divine Approbation, unless it can be made appear that his WILL * cannot possibly reach beyond these.

"3. If the Reason of a Duty ariseth from the relation subsisting between the Parties concerned, then 'tis obvious every such Duty has

* It may not be impertinent here to take notice of an eminent Distinction of Dr. Clarke's. Things, says he, contrary to that Part even of the Law of Nature itself, which is founded originally in the WILL of God, and not in the necessary and essential Nature of Things, may be done upon particular and extraordinary Occasions by the immediate and express Command of God. But that Part of the Law of Nature, which is not founded on the Will, but on the very Existence of God, and the essentially and eternally immutable Nature and Relation of Things; this is in no Circumstances capable of any Variation: For instance, that the Life of an innocent Person should be taken away by the Authority of any Power upon Earth, is contrary to the Law of Nature. Nevertheless, since the Right, which even an innocent Person has to his Life, is not founded in the essential Nature of Things, but merely in the Will and free Gift of God, 'tis plain he may as justly appoint it to be taken away by any other means he pleases, as by a Fever or a Pestilence: But had God commanded ABRAHAM to hate his blameless Son, or to take delight in Cruelty, Barbarity and Tyranny, the Command had been in its own Nature impossible and absurd.

"has its Foundation in the Nature of Things." Not quite so obvious, as appears from above.

"4. Whatever else goes under the Denomination of Duty cannot really be such; but must have, by some unwarrantable Means or other, that Name (in strict Reason unalienable) sacrilegiously imputed to it. For were it really what it is pretended to be, *viz.* a Duty, it must, according to the preceding Proposition, have its Foundation in the nature of Things; and as certainly as it is not therein founded, the Observation of it as a Duty, in order to secure the Favour of God and eternal Salvation, seems to be unnecessary and mere Superstition." Not altogether so certain, because the preceding Proposition has its Foundation only in Conjecture, therefore whatever is according to it, must be conjectural too.

"5. Natural Duties only are capable of being perceived by us to be Duties; these having their Foundation in Nature, and the Reason of Things themselves, are, in a degree proportionable to our respective Faculties, to be traced out by us; but whatever has not its Foundation there, and is but authoritatively asserted to be a Duty, can never possibly be perceived by us to be so, and must necessarily be derived from Superstition or Enthusiasm." Surely it may, and that as soon as the Authority upon which we receive it as such, appears

appears to be divine, all Superstition and Enthusiasm apart.

“ 6. That adorable Being! who in infinite
 “ Wisdom created us with reasoning Powers
 “ and Faculties, very limited and confined, will
 “ in justice require of us a Conduct but pro-
 “ portionate to the Abilities of Perception and
 “ Action that we have, and not according to
 “ what we have not.” Most assuredly.

Our Author proceeds, p. 10. “ If the *Wa-*
 “ *terlands*, the *Warburtons*, and the *Stebbings*
 “ of the Age, must be writing against the De-
 “ ists, let them do it by fairly denying their
 “ real Principles, and openly avowing and de-
 “ fending the contrary to them: *viz.* That
 “ there is a God;” And two or three more that
 follow of a like stamp, which no Man ever
 called in question. Indeed, the two last he
 has mentioned are of a more disputable na-
 ture, which the preceding might be judged
 necessary to introduce with some appearance
 of Credit.

6. “ As, by our very Frame and Constitution,
 “ we are rendered incapable of Perfection,
 “ so the kind Author of our Beings, who
 “ could not make us but to be happy, will
 “ graciously accept a sincere Desire and En-
 “ deavour to know, and do what is right,
 “ and Penitence and Amendment in all
 “ those Instances in which it appears to us
 “ we have done otherwise; this being the
 “ nearest Approach to Perfection, that, in
 “ our

“ our present State, we are capable of.” That God will graciously accept a sincere Desire and Endeavour to know and do what is right, is without all dispute. But to affirm that he will accept too of Penitence and Amendment *only* in all those Instances in which it appears to us we have done otherwise, is no less false, than God, who has expressly said he will not, is true. And we cannot but suspect the Sincerity of their Endeavours to know what is right, who are ignorant of this.

7. “ To aspire after rational Happiness, the same in kind with that of the Deity, by an humble Imitation of him, in all his imitable moral Perfections, is the only End of all true Religion.” Such an aspiring we take to be an aspiring just to no manner of purpose ; and for this Reason are far from taking it to be the only End of all true Religion.

He next enters upon proposing to us his Difficulties with regard to Christianity, in order to obtain Satisfaction.

“ Tho’, says he, *p.* 13. it is said by some, that Christianity is grounded on Natural Religion, and is an Improvement of it ; yet after all that has been said to exemplify it, or that has been offer’d in Proof of it, I cannot possibly conceive how an entire and perfect Structure, (which is the Case of Natural Religion) can

“ can only be a Foundation for a perfect
 “ Structure, or how a perfect Religion can
 “ be improv’d:” It may possibly then assist
 his Conception in this Perplexity, by taking
 the twofold State of Man, (*viz.* of Inno-
 cence and Guilt) into due Consideration.
 That his original State was very different
 from his present, that he was not from the
 Beginning that Creature so perverse in his
 Will, so weak in his Understanding, our
 Author cannot deny, because *Socrates and*
 * *others of old* do not. And *Socrates*
 I have as honourable an Opinion of as
 he can pretend to, whose Christian-like
 Practice (as recorded in † that valuable Piece
 of *Xenophon’s*) is truly deserving our Emu-
 lation and Praise. Now, with regard to
 Man in his original Perfection, natural Reli-
 gion may be consider’d as a perfect Structure,
 being answerable to every Purpose for which
 it was given him, and might be, for ought
 we know, sufficient of itself to make him
 happy. But if we change the Scene, and
 take a view of him in his present degraded
 State, it might no longer be able to answer
 that primary Intention, and become a Foun-
 dation for a perfect Structure, *viz.* Chri-
 stianity ;

* Sunt ingeniiis nostris semina innata virtutum, quæ si
 adolescere liceret, ipsa nos ad beatam vitam natura per-
 duceret. Nunc autem, simul atque editi in lucem &
 suscepti sumus, in omni continuo pravitate, & in summa
 opinionum perversitate versamur. Cic. Tusc. Disp. 3.

† Xenop. Memorabil.

stianity; and so a perfect Religion might and actually did admit of Improvement.

But supposing that the Religion or Law of Nature was as perfect as our Author contends for, that Christianity is no other than a mere Republication of that Law, it no ways answers the End for which he is so zealous for its Perfection, *viz* to make a particular Revelation (such as the Gospel is) altogether needless. And this will appear, if we consider the wide difference between the Law of Nature and the Light of Nature, *viz.* the Knowledge of that Law. However it comes to pass, or for what reasons, I shall not determine, but the Adversaries of Revelation in general have let this material Distinction alone, and chose to use the Terms promiscuously. They can never be thought insensible, that by far the greater number have an exceeding imperfect Knowledge of the * Law of Nature, so that (how perfect soever it may be in itself) a particular Revelation was needful to set it before those same Persons in a more distinct View. Whence (says a distinguish'd Writer) came this surprizing Change, that Regions formerly inhabited by ignorant and savage People should now out-shine ancient *Greece*, and the other *Eastern* Countries so renowned

* NUNC parvulos nobis dedit igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus opinionibusq; depravati sic restringimus, ut nusquam NATURÆ LUMEN appareat. *Cic. ibid.*

nown'd of old, in the most elevated Notions of Theology and Morality? Is it the Effect of our own Parts and Industry? Have our common Mechanicks more refin'd Understandings than the ancient Philosophers? It is owing to the God of Truth, who came down from Heaven, and condescended to be himself our Teacher. It is as we are Christians, that we profess more excellent and divine Truths than the rest of Mankind *. Hence we find *Tully* himself, at a time too when Learning and good Sense were the valued Attainments, virtually disclaiming the Sufficiency of Reason in religious Matters †, where he refuses to comply with *Cotta's* Request in giving him his own Sentiments on the Nature of the Gods and the like, after he had eminently display'd the Weakness of the several Sects of Philosophers. And *Socrates*, our common Favourite, manifestly allow'd the necessity of a Revelation, to acquaint Men what God is, and how he is to be worshipp'd, what Expiations he will accept for Sin, and how he is to be address'd with Success, to establish the grand Motives of Religion, and make the essential Duties of it obvious to the lowest Capacity ‡, where he says, these
are

* *Guardian*, N^o. 88.

† Vid. Lib. 3. ad finem de nat. Deorum.

‡ Plato Apol. Socrat.

are the noblest Parts of Knowledge, and consequently the most necessary to be believed and taught, if any Man can teach them. But no Mortal will be able to teach them, unless God be his Guide and Director. Nay, there is room to believe, that the most applauded Passages of the Heathen Writers, however esteem'd to be the genuine Product of unassisted Reason, were immediately borrow'd from the *Jews*. they fell amongst in the several Countries thro' which they travell'd in quest of Knowledge, or from Traditions they had left behind them, or from the Books of the Old Testament. From henceforth then let no Deist, or professed Enemy to Revelation, pretend a Zeal for natural Religion; for such his Pretensions are declared of no effect, and himself an inconsistent Creature.

To come to the point, p. 14. " I think,
 " says he, the grand Foundation of the Dif-
 " ference between the Deists and the Reli-
 " gious of all other Persuasions, is, Whe-
 " ther any Doctrine or Precept that has not
 " its Foundation apparently in Reason and
 " Nature, can be of the Essence of Reli-
 " gion.—And, p. 16. This will, without any
 " farther trouble, be adjusted, when this
 " Proposition, which Christians lay down
 " for a certain Truth, *viz.* that the Collec-
 " tion of Writings, commonly call'd the
 " Scriptures, are of a divine Inspiration, and

“ a Revelation from God to Mankind, be
 “ plainly and clearly made appear to be so.—
 “ But alas, alas ! p. 18. here we have a sur-
 “ prising Instance of the want of Unanimity
 “ among Christians, where it seems to be so
 “ peculiarly requisite ; the *Roman* Catho-
 “ licks drawing their Proof from the Testi-
 “ mony of the Church, the Protestants from
 “ the Word of God itself.”—Topicks which
 he has enlarg’d upon with abundance of seem-
 ing Content—and concludes the whole,
 p. 24. with, “ Upon the closest Inspection
 “ into this grand Affair, I am for the present
 “ pretty well convinc’d, that not only the
 “ great *Chillingworth*, but our distinguish’d
 “ Moderns among the rational Divines, with
 “ all their Refinement, are equally gravell’d
 “ with their Predecessors, when they come
 “ to the Discussion of this unchangeable
 “ Point, *viz.* that the Scriptures are known
 “ to be the Word of God, upon an honest
 “ Investigation of mere natural Reason, to
 “ any Man who shall impartially exercise it
 “ about them: For can a thing be but what
 “ it is, and yet be more than what it is at the
 “ same time ? Can a Man have but the
 “ Understanding of a Man, and yet discern
 “ that which is quite out of the reach of the
 “ human intellectual Faculties to perceive ?
 “ which must be the case, if Man can by his
 “ Reason discern the Truth of a Proposition
 “ that is above his Reason.” Resolve me
 first,

first, Whether a Man can by his Reason discern the Falshood of a Proposition above his Reason? With what Propriety then can a Deist insist upon the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c. being absurd, false and contradictory, that are confessedly out of the reach of his reasoning Faculty to form any Judgment at all about? And now, could it once be made appear, that a Man may by his Reason discern, *i. e.* be satisfied about the Truth of a Proposition above his Reason, could you, sincerely speaking, *almost persuade* yourself *to be a Christian*? Then every Christian takes this for as demonstrable a Truth as the Being of a God: For instance, that the Godhead consists of three Persons, is allow'd on all hands a Proposition above his Reason; the Truth of which, notwithstanding he is entirely satisfy'd about, and that by his Reason. For upon examining the Proofs on which this Proposition, (among others) is said to be revealed by God himself, and finding them such as his Reason tells him, he cannot but acquiesce in, he is plainly reduced to this Dilemma, either he must give up his Reason, or yield his Assent to the Truth of that Proposition, because what God saith, our Author grants, p. 18. is Truth. But may he possibly reply, What has being satisfied about the Truth of a Proposition to do with discerning it, that is, having an adequate Idea of the Proposition itself? And
the

the Answer is ready, *viz.* nothing at all ; nor is there a single *Christian* half so absurd as to pretend that he has a distinct Conception of that which is utterly inconceivable by a finite Understanding. But are there no Inconceivables in Natural Religion ? Or are you fixed not to believe a Letter the ALMIGHTY says, till you *have found out the ALMIGHTY himself to Perfection* ? I am not unaware, that he would fain interpose here, and tell me, that he has impartially examined the Proofs which are brought for the Truth of that Revelation which contains the above Proposition, and so far from finding them such as his Reason tells him he cannot but acquiesce in, that his Reason has told him more than once they are such as he cannot possibly acquiesce in. The Query is, whether his Reason has told him right or wrong, or rather whether it was his Reason that told him so ; and this must appear from a Review of the Proofs themselves. But first to go on with his Difficulties.

The great thing we read, *p.* 33. “ At
 “ which many serious and inquisitive Men
 “ boggle, is, that now they are revealed (as
 “ it is called) they are no more to be un-
 “ derstood or judged of by the human
 “ Powers, than they were before to be found
 “ out by them——and how such things can
 “ with Propriety be said to be revealed,
 “ they think stands very much in need of
 “ a

“ a Revelation to explain.” Can it with
 Propriety be said to be revealed by Reason,
 that this beautiful Fabrick of the World was
 raised out of nothing by an Almighty Hand,
 although in what manner it was so raised,
 Reason can form no Judgment at all? With
 equal Propriety it may be said to be revealed
 in those Writings, which, on account of their
 superior Excellency, are emphatically styled
The Scriptures, that there are three distinct Per-
 sons in the Divine Essence, although Reason
 can form no Judgment at all about the matter.
 Nor is this a Difficulty (as our Author seems
 to think) peculiar to the *Christian* Religion,
 for *Plato* himself made three Distinctions in
 the Deity, by the Names of Essential Good-
 ness, Mind and Spirit. That these things
 are so, Reason itself proclaims aloud, be-
 cause they are plainly taught us in his Word,
who cannot lye. But if we proceed to en-
 quire *How can these things be?* Reason is
 altogether silent. And what is THUS en-
 quired into, we can easily suppose may yet
 remain unrevealed, but can no ways infer
 with our Author, *p.* 83. “ That such a Sup-
 “ position carries with it such a high Re-
 “ flection either upon the natural or moral
 “ Character of the Deity, as implies a Want
 “ of Ability or Inclination to inform his
 “ Creatures of what he directly proposed
 “ to inform them of.” No, the plain In-
 ference is this, that Man is not a God: And
 this

this the plain Language of a Deist, that if God had designed me a supernatural Revelation of his Will, he would never have made mention of himself and his own Perfections, for these are in their own Nature incomprehensible by me; nor yet of his Counsels, for these are without all controversy past my finding out: And therefore as it was agreeable to his Will so to do, or rather so it is pretended, it is no way agreeable to my Understanding to give any heed to what is THUS revealed. But is this the Language of right Reason?

And likewise *p.* 34. " To talk of a Re-
 " velation of Things to Men in aid of Rea-
 " son, which though easily understood, yet
 " Reason cannot discover any proper Use
 " can be made of them, is alike absurd
 " and contradictory—As God will judge
 " the World in Righteousness, so it appears
 " to human Reason to be quite indifferent
 " and of no consequence to the Creature
 " who he is judged by, whether by the
 " Supreme Deity immediately, or by a Sub-
 " stitute; and if by a Substitute, then whe-
 " ther by *Jesus Christ*, or any other Agent.
 " I say it must be a Matter of indifference
 " to the Creature, who shall be his im-
 " mediate Judge, provided Righteousness be
 " the Rule of that Judgment, because his
 " Sentence will be the same. And if
 " Reason cannot make any Improvement
 " of

“ of this reveal'd Doctrine, viz. that *Jesus Christ* will judge the World, which surely it cannot; then how can it be said, with either Propriety or Truth, that it was given in aid of it?”

But, to use the Language of *St. Paul* in a different Sense, *we have not so learn'd Christ*, and may fairly ask you another Question, *How readeſt thou?* For admitting the Sentence will be the same, where it is said, *the Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son*, John 5. 22. such Reasons are immediately added why he did so, as may possibly be deem'd not quite so indifferent, and of no Consequence at all. It follows in the next Verse, v. 23. *that all Men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; which single Reason, had it been duly attended to, would have happily prevented such *Contentions* as have been follow'd by much *Evil* among Christians themselves, or those who believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. For how can that Man be said to honour the Son, even as he honours the Father, who denies him to be equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead? And we read, v. 27. he hath given him Authority to execute *Judgment*, *because he is the Son of Man*, the only Person in the Trinity who *took upon him the Form of a Servant*, and became obedient unto *Death, even the Death of the Cross*; and therefore the only Person who is exalted even

to the *Judgment-Seat*. Thus much seems implicitly contain'd in those exulting Words of our Saviour to the High-Priest; *NEVERTHELESS, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the SON OF MAN sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven* Matt. xxvi. 64. Again, as the Son of Man, he best knew what was in Man, was most intimately acquainted with our manifold and unavoidable Frailties. And surely, but to reflect that the very same Person who died in our stead, will come to judge us, may reasonably the more embolden us, *to look for Mercy in the midst of Judgment*. From whence it is plain, that in this Particular our Author *does err* for want of *knowing the Scriptures*.

He goes on, p. 37. " That human Reason is greatly limited and imperfect, is a Proposition which is readily subscrib'd to on all hands; but what Purposes this limited Faculty was intended to serve, and is actually capable of, are Points in which Men greatly differ. The Free-thinker conceives that human Reason was intended by the Author of our Beings to discover and ascertain the Truth of the following Propositions." Whatever it was originally intended to discover, or what it actually will discover in those Places which the Light of the Gospel has reach'd, I apprehend makes nothing at all for him, but only what mere Reason is able to discover without

out any foreign Assistance ; and considering it in this View, I shall proceed to examine the Truth of the Propositions here laid down.

1. " That the first *Cause* of all Things is a " Being not only of the most boundless " Power, but also of the most unlimited and " perfect Reason or Understanding." Most certain ; and as pretty near the self-same Answer will suit the five following, as being of a correspondent Nature, I shall not repeat them, but go on to the next.

7. " To govern our Conduct by our " Reason is certainly our Duty, and is all " that God requires of us, and to neglect " to regulate our Conduct by our Reason, " in that Proportion which God has been " pleas'd to dispense it to us, is criminal or " blame-worthy." To govern our Conduct by our Reason is certainly our Duty, and such a rational Procedure, we cannot but think directly leads to the Knowledge of all that God requires of us ; but that Reason alone is incapable of making that Discovery, we have already prov'd, p. 10.

8. " As there is no Individual of our Species, but has been more or less guilty, of " deviating from the Rule prescrib'd him by " his Reason, either the whole Species are " unpardonably guilty before God, or else " Repentance and Reformation are the means " of Reconciliation with him, and of restoring us to his Favour." Just neither one nor the other, as will shortly appear.

9. "That Repentance and Reformation are
 "the natural Means of reconciling us to God
 "when we are conscious of our having of-
 "fended him, is manifest from their being
 "invariably recommended to us by our Rea-
 "son, on all such Occasions, as the Means
 "proper for effecting it; for were the Case
 "otherwise, they could not be dictated to us
 "by Reason as Means to that End, because
 "had they not a natural Tendency to an-
 "swer the End, they would be unfit for
 "our Use, on account of their Insignifi-
 "cancy, and to make use of insignificant
 "Means, is a preposterous and unwarrant-
 "able Conduct; and to suppose what is
 "preposterous and unwarrantable can be the
 "Dictate of Reason, is absurd and a direct
 "Contradiction." THEREFORE to suppose
 that *Repentance and Reformation are the*
Means proper for effecting a Reconciliation,
 can be the Dictate of Reason, is absurd and
 a direct Contradiction, because this is plain-
 ly to suppose what is preposterous and un-
 warrantable. For that nothing less than ab-
 solute Obedience is due to our Maker, is
 the Voice of Reason: now Repentance is
 no other than a future Obedience, which
 had been equally due had we never disobey'd
 at all; and consequently our present doing
 well can never atone for our former doing
 ill. Men, says the excellent *Boyle*, having
 displeas'd God, and consequently forfeited all
 Right and natural Possibility to Happiness,
 even

even whilst they compleated the forlornness of their Condition by the Lethargy of not being sensible of it, and were as careless to seek Means of Recovery as they had been unable to devise them of themselves, even then his restless Love would never be at quiet, till it had set his Omniscience on work to contrive Expedients, and to find out a way to reconcile his Justice and his Mercy, in reconciling Sinners to himself. And this he did, in sending his only begotten Son into the World, *who knew no Sin*, to be a *Propitiation for our Sins*. However, such a Conduct as this, *viz.* “ That the Suffer-
 “ ings of the Innocent should dispose an
 “ Intelligent Being to shew Mercy to the
 “ Guilty, we read, *p. 41.* the Deist con-
 “ ceives to be both unnatural and improper,
 “ and therefore,” that is, because he, meaning
 himself, conceives so “ must be the pro-
 “ duce of Weakness or Wickedness.” Is not
 this in the Language of Mr. *Pope*, to

*Snatch from his Hand the Balance, and the Rod,
 Rejudge his Justice, be the God of God?*

Ess. on Man.

Or rather in that of the *Psalmist*, *Making
 God such a one as himself.* But unless he
 proceeds a Step farther, and takes him for
 an *Heathen Idol* too, *which hath Ears and
 hears not*, he cannot but take the Apostle's
 Inference in good part, *Repent therefore of
 this thy Wickedness, and pray God if per-
 haps the Thought of thine Heart may be
 forgiven*

forgiven thee, Acts viii. 22. For Repentance on all such Occasions is recommended to us by our Reason as indispensably necessary, though by itself ineffectual to obtain Forgiveness.

10. " Therefore, to repent of what upon
 " a cool Review of our Conduct appears to
 " be criminal, and to reform it, is a Dictate
 " of our Reason, is what God, the Author
 " of our Beings, requires of us, in order for
 " us to do on our Part, what he knows
 " to be necessary to our Happiness." But
 not *therefore*, because Repentance is the
 Means proper for effecting a Reconciliation
 (as our Author would infer;) for Reason
 plainly dictates the contrary. But therefore,
 because God requires it of us, in order to do
 on our part what he knows to be necessary
 thereunto. Nor is this all which he requires
 on our Part; for he has also made it an in-
 dispensable Condition of our future Happi-
 ness, that we believe *in the Lord Jesus*.

11. " If God requires and directs us by Rea-
 " son and Conscience to perform what he
 " knows is necessary to our Happiness, he
 " will certainly do on his Part what he knows
 " is necessary to that End, *viz.* forgive us
 " our Sins, and reinstate us in his Favour."
 Forgiveness of our Sins is without dispute
 necessary to that End, *viz.* our Happiness;
 but the Query is, whether something was not
 necessary to be done on his Part previous to
 such

such Forgiveness, which we *Christians* have our Reasons to maintain.*

12. " If so, then all other Means that
 " either have, are, or may be deemed ne-
 " cessary and made use of, as such, by Jews,
 " Pagans, Christians, Mahometans or others,
 " are unnatural and foreign to the Purpose;
 " and consequently are superfluous and
 " downright Superstition." That is, if God
 will forgive us upon our true Repentance
 only, then all other Means, that are deem'd
 necessary by Christians, are unnatural and
 foreign to the purpose and consequently
 superfluous. By a Parity of reasoning, if
 he will not, and much more, if he cannot,
 consistent with himself, then—the Con-
 sequence is equally obvious.

It appears then upon the whole, that
 the Free-thinker † conceives that human
 Reason

* Sin cannot be pardon'd but in a way consistent with the utmost Perfection of all God's Attributes, but to find out a Method which would correspond to all the Exigencies of this Case, requir'd an adequate Knowledge of the divine Nature. No less was necessary than to take the Manhood into God, by which ineffable Union there arose a Person holy enough to merit God's Favour to us by a perfect Obedience, weak enough to suffer Punishment for our Sins, and of Dignity enough to stamp such a value on those Sufferings, as to make an ample Satisfaction to the divine Justice. Dr. Delaune's Sermon.

† The Characteristic of this Sect, says an admir'd Author, does not lie at all in the Definition of *Thinking*, but in stating the true Meaning of their Adjective FREE; which in fact will be found to carry much the same No-
 tion,

Reason is able to discover certain Truths, which it never did nor ever will be able to discover.

Proceed we now to his weighty Objections.

“ This, then, says our Author, p. 42. in
 “ my Opinion is a very weighty Objection
 “ against the Divinity of such Doctrines as are
 “ super-rational and super-natural; because
 “ they cannot possibly appear to the human
 “ Understanding to be super-natural and
 “ super-rational Truths.” By which he would
 be understood (if I do not mistake him) they
 cannot possibly be demonstrated by Arguments
 drawn from the Nature of the Doctrines
 themselves, as you would demonstrate the
 Truth of any Proposition in *Euclid*, which
 is very true; and if they could be so demonstrated,
 that Instant they would cease to be super-rational
 and super-natural, *ergo* they cannot possibly
 appear to the human Understanding to be super-rational
 Truths. O

mirâ

tion, as *bold, rash, arrogant, presumptuous*, together
 with a strong Propension to the *Paradox* and the *Perverse*.
 For *free* with them has no relation at all to outward
 Impediment or Inhibition, but means an inward
 Promptness and Forwardness to decide about Matters
 beyond the reach of their Studies, *in opposition* to the rest
 of Mankind—Another Idea couch'd in their Adjective
free, is Jealousy, Mistrust and Surmise. 'Tis a firm
 Persuasion among them, that there are but two sorts in
 Mankind, Deceivers and Deceiv'd, Cheats and Fools. Hence
 it is, that dreaming and waking they have one perpetual
 Theme, *Priest-Craft*.

mirâ calliditate Virum! and here we confess he is unanswerable. But admitting the Evidences for the Truth of the Christian Religion to be such as we take them to be, *viz.* such as unbias'd Reason cannot but submit to the Force of, its Doctrines cannot but appear to the human Understanding to be Truths, at the same time that they are super-rational and super-natural ones, because they are descended from Truth itself. This Objection therefore, how weighty soever in his Opinion, I should rather call an *empty* Cavil, unless we take him in a figurative Sense, and so preserve its original Distinction for the *Catachresis* sake.

“ And p. 46. I apprehend it to be the
 “ Case with all Doctrines, that are properly
 “ speaking super-natural and super-rational;
 “ they neither furnish the Mind with useful
 “ and venerable Truths, nor introduce greater
 “ Rectitude of Affection and Action. And
 “ this, Sir, is to me a weighty Objection a-
 “ gainst the Divinity of such Doctrines, and
 “ is a Difficulty insolvable to me.” Here he
 supposes, for Argument sake, the Doctrines
 to be true, and objects to their being frivo-
 lous and unconcerning Truths, than which
 can any thing be imagined more astonishing?

* To instance in that fundamental one of
Christ's

* Our Author indeed instances in the Doctrine of the Trinity, and admitting that God is distinguishable into three distinct Parts or Somewhats (as he chuses to term it)

E

each

Christ's coming into the World to save Sinners, which is undoubtedly a super-rational Doctrine, or such a one as Reason left to itself could never have made a discovery of. Is there among the whole Circle of Truths a more interesting one, or that can so justly challenge our highest Veneration? Art thou, whoever thou art, *that fillest thy Mouth with Arguments*, no Sinner, or such a one as even the Saviour of the World cannot save? Can a single Argument beside so powerfully engage us in the Practice of Virtue, so effectually disarm Vice of its fascinating Charms, as to behold with a steady Eye of Faith in our *dear Lord's* Agonies what it deserv'd *? Or can we help loving him who gave so unparallel'd an Instance of his Love for us, as to *lay down his Life* for us? From what

each of which is characteris'd by a distinct Name, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, puts the Question, What natural or moral Improvement does this Exhibition bring with it to Mankind? And the Answer, says he, I think is evident, viz. none at all. But let him consult the celebrated Dr. *Waterland's* Importance of the Trinity, and he will find upon second Thoughts, that the Answer he has made to his own Question is none at all, or which is much the same in the present Case, evidently false.

* When a Man with a steady Faith looks back on the great Catastrophe of this Day, with what bleeding Emotions of Heart must he contemplate the Life and Sufferings of his Deliverer? When his Agonies occur to him, how will he weep to reflect that he has often forgot them for the Glance of a wanton, for the Applause of a vain World, for an Heap of fleeting, past Pleasures, which are at present aking Sorrows. Spectator, N^o. 356.

what one Topic can we derive more substantial, more successful Comfort in our Passage thro' this Vale of Tears? A CHRISTIAN is *troubled on every side, yet not distress'd; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroy'd—Knowing that he which rais'd up the Lord Jesus, shall raise him up also by Jesus.*

*The Contemplation does suspend our Woe,
And make a Truce with all the Ills we
know.* Waller.

A DEIST, whenever he stands in need of a future Blessing, or Deliverance from a present Evil, and makes his Approach to the Throne of Grace, what an essential Part of our Address to God has he voluntarily depriv'd himself of? For *Christ's sake* he cannot add, and for his own sake, surely he will not add. Here then our Author has not only let us into his Mistake, but the Progress of it: for first it is plain, that he has a wrong Apprehension of Things; then, for want of a better, he concludes amiss; and lastly, complains of Difficulties arising from such Deductions, which are *therefore* insolvable to him, because they are purely *his own*.

“ And tho' Christians, p. 48. are apt to
“ boast of the great Benefit that has accrued
“ to Mankind by the Promulgation of the
“ Christian Religion; yet it is much to be
“ question'd, Whether the poor *Americans*
“ have not too much reason to consider the
E 2 “ coming

“ coming of Christians and the Christian
 “ Religion among them, to have been the
 “ greatest Evil or Curse that ever befel them;
 “ and that not only on account of the Mil-
 “ lions of People among them, who have
 “ fallen a Sacrifice to Christian Piety and
 “ Zeal; but also, on account of that Perfi-
 “ diousness and Baseness, and that much
 “ greater Degeneracy of Affection and Ac-
 “ tion, that has taken place, and prevail’d
 “ among them since the Introduction of
 “ Christianity; and that Misery and Slavery
 “ they have been brought into, and which
 “ is likely to be render’d perpetual, by the
 “ illuminated and improv’d Disciples of *Jesus*
 “ *Christ* becoming their Masters.” A Period
 so full of Malice and Disingenuity, so big
 with Scorn and Indignation, that I cannot help
 thinking but he exclaim’d on the Occasion,

Huic palmam do; hic me magnifice effero.

However, in regard to his unfeigned Con-
 cern for the Distress’d, wherever dispers’d,
 it may be thought worthy of Notice. Ad-
 mitting then the Case of the poor *Ameri-*
cans to be just as our Author represents it,
 (which I am far from being satisfy’d about)
 can he possibly charge these melancholy Cir-
 cumstances on the coming of that Religion
 amongst them, all the Commandments of
 which are briefly comprehended in this Say-
 ing, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy-*
self,

self, Rom. 13. 9. Has that Perfidiousness and Baseness, and that much greater Degeneracy of Affection and Action taken place among them *since* they became Christians, or *the Elect of God*? and *therefore* (as St. Paul strongly argues) under the highest Obligation to *put on Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave them*, Col. 3.

12, 13. The very Scoffers at our Religion have magnify'd the Precepts of it, recommending the Practice of them among themselves, and the Time *has been*, that nothing was more common in their Mouths, than *see how the Christians love one another*. Agreeable to which, we read of the Multitude that first believ'd, that *they were of one Heart, and of one Soul*, Acts 4. 32. Nor can it be denied, but that since that time, *many have come in his Name, and said too, I am a CHRISTIAN, and have deceiv'd many*. Mark xiii. 6.

RATHER then, tho' *Deists* are apt to boast of the great Benefit that has accrued to them by shaking off the Prejudices of Education, *viz. Christianity*, and speak so handsomely of *Reason*, it is with me no question at all, but they may one day consider it as the greatest Evil that ever befel them, and that on account of their having abus'd it to the maddest Purposes of *blaspheming that worthy Name*

Name by which we are call'd, and so they might acquit themselves, at least to themselves, *charging God foolishly*. And what must render *their Sin*, in the emphatical Language of a despis'd *Author*, *exceeding sinful*, they have so heinously transgress'd without the colour of a Pretence, unless they plead the necessity of *talking against the Most High*, in order to preserve that so much valued Reputation for Wit and fine Breeding, which they had no other possible way of acquiring.

“ Here perhaps, he goes on, p. 48. it
 “ may not be improper to enquire more particularly what is the proper Business of
 “ Reason, or what is its natural Province
 “ in the great Affair of Religion?” And for this end he has first quoted Dr. *Benson*, for agreeing that the rational Divines cannot allow themselves to blaspheme, or speak evil of it, because they look upon it as the Candle of the Lord within them; and then produces Dr. *Manton*, whom he presumes to be of that number, as a melancholy Instance of blaspheming, and speaking evil of Reason, by greatly depreciating it, from whence he draws these two Inferences.

1. “ That we cannot be too cautious of
 “ thinking diminutively of Reason, or of
 “ exchanging the certain great Advantages
 “ we derive from its natural and clear Illuminations, for those we may be tempted to expect from some other, though
 “ of

“ of a supposed super-natural, yet of an ob-
 “ viously indistinct and convulsive Glare; for
 “ would not such an incautious Procedure
 “ be a Case analogous to that of the Tra-
 “ veller, who was betray’d into a dangerous
 “ Ditch by an *Ignis fatuus*, whose Gui-
 “ dance he inadvertently chose to follow,
 “ before that of the Lamp which he car-
 “ ried in his Hand.” Now there does not
 appear to me any Exchange in the Case,
 for the Christian enjoys the certain great
 Advantages to be deriv’d from the natural
 and clear Illuminations of Reason in com-
 mon with the Deist, besides those which are
 peculiar to himself, since God has no ways
 put out the native Lamp of the Soul in
 vouchsafing us a brighter, but commanded
 us to use it as far as it is able to carry us;
 and then to call the plainest Directions to
 secure our Title to an *Inheritance that*
fadeth not away for ever in the Hea-
vens, to be found in the *Scriptures* and
 no where else; to call these, I say, an *Ignis*
fatuus, an *indistinct convulsive Glare*, is an
 obvious Abuse of Speech. And the Instance
 of a Traveller, &c. which was added for
 Illustration sake, and might have been very
 taking upon another Occasion, seems alto-
 gether foreign to the present.

2. “ How little Reason we have to ex-
 “ pect a rational and satisfactory Informa-
 “ tion, what it is we are required to un-
 “ derstand

" derstand the Gospel to be ; or to believe
 " with regard to the Number, or the pro-
 " per and distinct Matter of its peculiar
 " Doctrines, whilst Divines themselves ap-
 " pear to know so little of, and to differ
 " so widely about it." To argue from the
 want of Knowledge in some Divines, or
 want of Agreement in others, must cer-
 tainly pass with himself for a way of argu-
 ing that little or no Stress is to be laid up-
 on, since a clear Information in these sever-
 al Points may be so easily had, by com-
 paring the Doctrines as they lay in those
 very Divines, with the same as they lay
 in the *Scriptures*, from whence they at least
 agree to have taken them.

" However, Dr. *Benson*, we read p. 52.
 " has in behalf of his Reverend Brethren
 " the rational Divines, made a Concession
 " at once to the rational Free-Thinker, of
 " all that he has ever contended for." Is
 not this a little alarming at first sight?
 Should not one be half-inclined to think,
 that Dr. *Benson* had e'en given up the
 Cause of Christianity, and declared all on
 a sudden for Deism, as explained at first,
 being the true Religion. No, but he has
 granted that " Reason is first the Glory ; se-
 " condly, the inseparable Glory ; and thirdly,
 " the peculiar Glory, of every Intelligent Be-
 " ing." And this we are told at present is
 all that the rational Free-thinker, and him-
 self,

self, I suppose, among the rest, ever contended for. Then, all Contention aside, let us shake Hands upon the same. Indeed, it follows, if Reason be the Glory of an Intelligent Being, it is so, because it is that by which alone he is capable of justly arranging his Ideas, and perceiving their Agreement or Disagreement, and thereby of distinguishing betwixt Truth and Falshood, Good and Evil, in all those things in which his Duty and Happiness are concern'd. Which we can by no means admit of, because a Man is capable of justly arranging his Ideas, and perceiving their Agreement or Disagreement, only in those Things which come within the Limits of his *Reason*, which fall exceeding short of *all* those Things in which his Duty and Happiness are concern'd. And for the Truth of these we are highly satisfied to take the *Word of God*.

“ When *St. Paul*, says he, *p. 60.* went
 “ from Place to Place preaching the Gospel
 “ at *Theffalonica*, at *Berea*, and elsewhere,
 “ nothing could have been more proper,
 “ nor was better adapted to answer the
 “ Purpose of his Ministry, *viz.* the work
 “ ing the Conviction and Conversion of his
 “ Hearers, than for him to have exempli-
 “ fy'd his human Wisdom and Skill in Na-
 “ tural Philosophy, by drawing those Con-
 “ clusions, and thereby producing those
 “ Evidences from the Works of Creation

“ and Providence, as prov'd the Truth and
 “ Divinity of what he exhibited to his re-
 “ spective Audiences : I say, nothing could
 “ have been more proper than this, because,
 “ as it would have been in some measure
 “ an Appeal to the Understanding of his
 “ Hearers, with respect to the Truth of
 “ what he deliver'd to them, against which
 “ an Objection from the quarter of Reason
 “ cou'd scarcely have lain ; so it would have
 “ been a solid Foundation for the Faith of
 “ his Converts to have rested upon.—Where-
 “ as to have demanded their Assent autho-
 “ ritatively, or to have extorted it by Me-
 “ naces and Threatnings, (*He that believeth*
 “ *not, shall be damned*) or by Acts of Power,
 “ by subverting the settled Laws of Na-
 “ ture, striking the Mind with Wonder and
 “ Astonishment, and thereby affecting the
 “ Passions ; this was not dealing with Men
 “ as Men, but rather like Horses and Asses
 “ that have no Understanding capable of ra-
 “ tional Conviction.

Tu quantus, quantus, nihil nisi sapientia es.

A worthy Tutor for St. *Paul*, and likely
 enough to take him at his own Word, *not*
meet to be called an Apostle. But in what
Chapter and Verse do we read of his *ex-*
torting the Assent of his Hearers by Me-
 naces and Threatnings. We read much of
 his *persuading* and *disputing* Things con-
 cerning

cerning the Kingdom of God, but not a Syllable of his forcing Men to believe him. 'Tis true, he did, by virtue of his Authority, demand their Assent to such Doctrines as they had never perhaps heard of before, and could never have discover'd by dint of Argument, but did he not first demonstrate his Authority to be Divine, and produce such authentick Testimonials of his Mission as suffic'd to put it out of all Dispute whether he really came from God or not? And yet after all, did he not leave them to their own Liberty? 'Tis true, he proposed such Rewards and Punishments as were most likely to influence their Conduct; but still was not this *dealing with them as Men*, as rational Creatures, whose Actions are in their own power? Where he speaks of *Abraham's* Faith in offering up his Son *Isaac*, *Heb. 11. 18.* it follows in the next Verse, that *he accounted*, (*i. e.* reason'd with himself, the very same Word in the Original being thus render'd, *Mar. 11. 31.*) *that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence he receiv'd him in a Figure.* And it is recorded, *Acts 17. 11.* in honour of the *Bereans*, that they search'd the Scriptures *daily*, *whether these Things were so: therefore*, (*i. e.* upon finding them to be so, after such a laudable Enquiry, it immediately follows, *many of them*, not all, for it was a matter of Choice, *believ'd.* The Inference then is

easy, *Go thou and do likewise*. But let me earnestly beg of you first, *to cast away* the Over-ballast of Prejudice and Affection, lest you make *a Shipwreck of your Faith*, and bring upon yourself *swift Destruction*. For be not deceiv'd; *he that believeth not, shall be damned*, is the Sentence past, and irreversible.

Again, Dr. Benson says, according to our Author, p. 64. *That Reason was intended for constant and perpetual Use*. And would to God, prays he, *we did constantly regard, and perpetually concur in so benign an Intention*. Amen, from the Bottom of my Heart. "But surely, adds he, those Gentle-
 " men cannot without blushing assert, that
 " Reason was intended for constant and per-
 " petual Use, who maintain that some of
 " those religious Affairs, that are of the high-
 " est Importance to us, are even yet Matters
 " of pure Revelation." But surely they may, nay, must; for, setting aside their Reason, (which was intended for THIS constant and perpetual Use) they could never have been satisfied, that those *very religious* Affairs are what they really are, even Matters of pure Revelation. And now, tho' it may not be in his power to blush, it may be in his power to apologize for his Infirmary, and say, I was mistaken. At the same time let him give up the Inference he makes, p. 34. from supposing that his Reason was intended for constant

stant and perpetual Use, especially in religious Affairs. " Then a real Revelation
 " from God must actually reveal, open or
 " explain, to his Reason, all the several
 " Subjects, Matters or Parts which collec-
 " tively compose it, seeing his Understand-
 " ing is the only Power or Principle in him,
 " which can be any way useful to him in en-
 " quiring into, and discovering the Particu-
 " lars reveal'd." For that some of those
 Particulars, *viz.* those relating to his Nature
 and Counsels, are, in this sense, undiscoverable by Reason, has been granted, p. 16.
 and the Cause alledg'd; but nevertheless that
 Reason was intended for constant Use, has
 been just prov'd.

The Questions then which follow, p. 66.
 are easily answer'd. " Where, says he, is
 " the Man, the Christian, the Believer, who
 " durst, on Principles of pure Reason, at-
 " tempt, so as to convince the Understand-
 " ing of another Man, that an unoriginated,
 " uncompounded, immaterial, and pure Spi-
 " rit, should, like one of the deriv'd, com-
 " pounded, material human Species, have a
 " Son? That he should be a begotten Son?
 " That he should be his only begotten Son?
 " What we are determinately to understand,
 " by the Terms *begotten*, and *only begotten*,
 " as applied by finite Creatures to an infi-
 " nitely perfect Mind—Why God, who is
 " infinitely happy, and all-sufficient in him-
 " self,

"self, and therefore seems to have no In-
 "ducement on his own account, should beget
 "a Son? Why it should be deem'd requisite
 "for God to beget a Son on our account,
 "that by him God might be placable and
 "merciful to us, when Placability, or a
 "Disposition to shew Mercy to the proper
 "Objects of Mercy, is his very Nature?"
 With regard to some then I answer, no where
 without the *Authority of Scripture*; and with
 regard to the rest, no where with *that Autho-*
riety, because no apparent Contradiction or Ab-
 surdity is to be there met with. And what
 else is it to ask, Why God who is infinitely
 happy and all-sufficient in himself, and there-
 fore seems to have no Inducement on his
 own account, should beget a Son, *who was*
in the Beginning with himself, 1 Joh. i. 2.
the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,
 Heb. xiii. 8. Why it should be deem'd requi-
 site for God to beget a Son on our account,
by whom we ourselves and all Things were
made, Joh. i. 3. Errata's that he would scarce
 have pardoned in one that professed himself
 a *Teacher of the Gospel*. How egregious
 then must they appear in one, that takes upon
 him to correct an *Apostle*, and St. Paul the
 most learned of all the *Apostles*! A Dispo-
 sition to shew mercy is certainly his very Na-
 ture, but then *he will have Mercy on whom*
he will have Mercy; that is, just in what
 Manner and upon what Conditions he him-
 self

self thinks proper. And shall not he that *sheweth mercy* be at liberty to fix the Terms on which he will *shew* it? Or shall we stand out and refuse to be happy, unless we can be so too in our own way? As to God's *having a Son*, no Man could have known it, unless God himself had told him so, and therefore in all Cases of this nature we have recourse to the Authority of *Scripture**.

“ Moral Virtues, it is true, are most excellent; but what then? Moral Virtues have not Christianity for their Parent, but are the neat Produce and the genuine Offspring of Reason and Nature, and were equally excellent and valuable before Christianity took place, and ever was, and will “ be

* Observe, says a conspicuous Writer, we do not say, any thing incomprehensible to Reason is separate and alone the proper Object of Belief, but as it is supported and established by some other known and comprehensible Truth. As, if *Abraham* had been told by some ordinary Man, that in his and *Sarah*'s decrepid Age he should be blessed with a Son; this Promise so alone, without its Basis to stand upon, could not have challenged his Assent, because the thing was impossible in the way of Nature. But since it was God Almighty, with whom all Things are possible, that was the Author of that Promise, by the Mediation of that certain Truth, the Veracity and Omnipotence of God, without Hesitation he believ'd, and so obtain'd the Glory to be the Father of the Faithful. So true it is, that Reason itself warrants us to proceed and advance by Faith, even beyond the Sphere and Regions of Reason.

Dr. Bentley's Sermon at the public Commencement at Cambridge.

"be the same whether Christianity ever had
"been or not." p. 71.

What think you of Humility, Meekness, and forgiving our Enemies? Are these no Moral Virtues, or are they the neat Produce and the genuine Offspring of Reason and Nature? Can any Man, says the learned *Blackwall*, shew me a Precept among the most solid and celebrated Masters of Morality so useful and divine as to the Sense, so clearly compact and so beautifully turned as to the Expression, as that sacred Direction, *Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* Rom. 12. 21. The Extent of their Morality reached no farther than what they called the four Cardinal Virtues, and these they practised upon a very inferior *Principle*. *Tully* and *Seneca* have doubtless many high Encomiums on *Prudence*, *Justice*, and *Temperance*, strongly recommending them as in their own Nature decent and proper, arising from the Relations of Persons and Things. But what then? Whether of the two has derived our Obligation to the Practice of them from the Authority of God, who had a Right to command them as the Author of those Relations themselves, which is the true *Principle* of religious Virtue; and for this Reason they are so generally called in *Scripture* by the Name of Duties. Then with regard to the Motives which are super-added by the Christian Scheme, are they not far more prevalent
and

and engaging! When *St. Paul* would render the Mind equal and compos'd under the Reproaches of Envy or Prejudice, which is a singular Proof of an heroic one, Consider, says he, *him* (the Son of God) *who endur'd such Contradictions of Sinners against himself.* Heb. xii. 3. A Consideration, how full of Energy and Persuasion to every true Disciple or *Servant of Christ*, who cannot but rest highly content *but to be equal with his Master.* If *Epictetus* has the same Point in view he bids us consider, whether the Reproaches are true; if they are not, Consider, says he, that ye are not the Persons reproached, but that some imaginary Being is revil'd; if they are, give yourselves another Turn, and the Reproaches cease of course, at least ye are no ways concern'd in them. Considerations, how justly to be admir'd in a *Heathen*, yet how vastly inferior to that of the *Christian*! When the *Apostle* would invite us to love one another, he fixes our Attention on that surpassing Instance of God's Love for us in sending his Son into the World, that *the World through him might be saved*, and dwells pathetically on the favourite Theme. A *Socrates* might have put us in mind of our partaking the same Nature, and consequently the same Calamities, and have argued from either Topic, the Reasonableness of a mutual Regard, but surely not with equal Success.

If St. *Paul* would recommend Chastity and banish every inordinate Desire, *Know ye not*, says he, *that ye are Members of Christ?* Shall I then take the *Members of Christ*, and make them the *Members of an Harlot*, 1 Cor. vi. 15. What a sudden Veil has he drawn o'er the *finest Face*? How contemptible has he rendered its passionate Admirer by a single Question? When *Seneca* proposes the same End, what does he say more, nay what can he than that the opposite Vice clouds the Understanding, defaces the reasonable Soul, and levels us with the Beasts that perish; Arguments tho' considerable in themselves, how mean and trifling do they appear when compared with the Apostle's! To give one Instance more, What a resistless Argument has he made use of, when he would learn us to be content, *whether we want or whether we abound*. (himself a perfect Master in the Art) "*If God spared not his own Son, how will he not with him freely give us all Things?*" viz. that are most fit for us:

*Nam pro jucundis APTISSIMA quaque
dabunt Dii.* Juv.

Not to mention the many illustrious *Examples* which the *Scriptures* abound with, that can hardly fail to warm a generous Heart into an Emulation of their several Virtues. And it is a common Remark, that there is scarce a single Vice but the Heathens might plead

plead an Indulgence in from the Authority of their *Gods* themselves. Upon the whole, we may fairly conclude, that our Author was somewhat rash and presumptuous in affirming in the very same Page, that *all other Things in Christianity beside the Moral Virtues*, as treated by the Heathens, which he calls *borrowed Ware*, are *all that is Christianity properly so called*; and again, that *Moral Virtues are as distinct from Christianity, as Christianity is from Mahometism* *.

But, next he proceeds gloriously upon a Concession of Dr. Benson's, viz. *Where there is no Idea, there can be no Assent*; which I am a little surpriz'd at, if he did make it, and must beg leave to take back again. For he goes on, "after the closest Application I am capable of, I neither

G 2

" have

* There is a fine Passage of sound Morality and generous Charity raised above most of the Pagan Moralists before Christianity in an Epistle of the famous *Pliny*, Ep. 9. I would have him who is truly liberal to give to his Country, Kinsmen, Friends, I mean poor Friends, not as those who give chiefly to those Persons, who are not able to give again. How near in Sense and Words to St. *Luke* in one Part? how much inferior in the Encouragement to this Charity which the Saviour of the World has given and transmitted to us by the Pen of his Evangelist! When thou makest a Dinner or a Supper, call not thy Friends, nor thy Brethren, neither thy Kinsmen, nor thy rich Neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and Recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a Feast, call the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, the Blind. And—thou shalt be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just. *Luke* xiv. 12, 13, 14. *Blackwall's Sac. Class.*

“ have, nor can form any Idea of the Dei-
 “ ty’s begetting a Son ; what then is the
 “ Consequence ? why, according to Dr. *Ben-*
 “ *son*, and I beg leave to add the Nature
 “ of the Thing also, I must disbelieve and
 “ reject it.—This Doctrine then of God’s
 “ having a begotten Son, being out of the
 “ reach of our discerning Faculty, and not
 “ having any Evidence or Proof from Rea-
 “ son or Nature to support it, cannot be
 “ the Object of our Faith, upon the Prin-
 “ ciples laid down, seeing whatever Proof
 “ may be brought from Scripture, they are
 “ all insignificant in the present Argument,
 “ as the Divine Authority of the Scrip-
 “ tures themselves are here allow’d to de-
 “ pend solely upon the internal Excellency
 “ and apparent Reasonableness of its Doc-
 “ trines, in all Doctrinal Matters. And—
 “ if then I have no Idea of a Doctrine
 “ which owes its Rise to the Christian Re-
 “ velation, and it is agreed, that where
 “ there is no Idea, there can be no Assent,
 “ as the Gentlemen do, who pique them-
 “ selves on the Character of rational Di-
 “ vines, were I to give my Assent to it, upon
 “ what Principles could I do it ? Principles
 “ of real Religion, Reason and Truth ?
 “ Certainly, whatever Principles it could be
 “ upon, it could not possibly be upon these.”
 No, upon an ancient Principle of SELF-
 CONTRADICTION. But setting aside all pre-
 agreement, certainly upon the Principles of
 real

real Religion, Reason and Truth, as I have already prov'd p. 13. And for the very Reason you have given, because it has no Evidence from Reason, it becomes a proper Object of Faith, which is an Assent to any thing credible merely upon Testimony. And so far from allowing you that the Divine Authority of the *Scriptures* depends solely upon the apparent Truth and Reasonableness of its Doctrines, that we do not rest it at all there, but on the contrary affirm, that the Truth and Reasonableness of them depends solely upon the Divine Authority of the *Scriptures*; which remains to be consider'd.

“ However, p. 76. if Dr. *Benson*, or any
 “ other Divine, whether Rational, Irrational,
 “ or Enthusiastick, will be pleased to come
 “ fairly and fully into this Question, and
 “ shew plainly and distinctly what Part it
 “ is which Scripture is to bear, in distin-
 “ guishing and judging of Religion and re-
 “ veal'd Matters, I assure you, Sir, it shall
 “ carefully and candidly be consider'd.” If
 by *Scripture* we may understand *Reason*, I
 will engage, tho' no Divine, to come as fairly
 and fully into the Question as I am able, but
 to talk of the Scripture's bearing a Part in
 distinguishing and judging of those Religi-
 ous Matters which itself hath revealed, is not
 quite so intelligible. Indeed, the Scripture
 is admirable in explaining itself, and the dif-
 ferent

ferent Parts of it, let in surprizing Light upon each other, as might plainly be shew'd, if I thought he would be pleas'd to call this *coming fairly and fully into the Question*. But I am almost inclin'd to think that he would put us here upon demonstrating " *that those Parts of the Scripture objected to by the Deists, as unintelligible now they are reveal'd in the Bible (whatever they may have been before) are on a level with natural Reason, p. 28.*" Or that the very same Parts of Scripture, which are above Reason are on a level with it too; which we perfectly disclaim, and infer with a *Brother-Deist* (for *Terence* too I suppose, must be of the number)

Homine imperito nunquam quicquam injustus est.

Tho', by the by, I can call this no better than *deriding the absent*; and were he but present to speak for himself, and especially *Socrates*, you might reasonably look for such a Reply as *Augustus* made once, to a Person that had treated him far below his Greatness, *I knew not before that we were such Familiars*. With regard then to the Part which Reason is to bear in distinguishing and judging of reveal'd Matters, " Whatever, says " he, p. 74. upon a fair Trial appears to be " cognizable by, consonant to, and is founded " in Reason and Nature, all such things " Reason

“ Reason pronounces to be Truths; and if
 “ you please, divine Truths, (using the term
 “ *divine* in a loose improper sense.”)—So
 far we agree. But if upon enquiry it appears
 to be above, or repugnant to Reason, or
 not founded therein, then Reason pro-
 nounces it not divine—Here we differ, and
 beg that you will distinguish between Mat-
 ters above, and repugnant to Reason; for as
 to the former, we suspend our Judgment till
 a previous Enquiry be made, *viz.* Whether
 the Revelation itself which contains them be
 divine or not, and then pronounce accord-
 ingly. So that this Sentence, *viz. Reason*
is not the only Guide in matters of Reli-
gion; and that Reason and Scripture are
both to be regarded, was introduc’d by Dr.
Benson, (not as our Author observes) to
save Appearances, but to save the *Truth*.
 “ Certainly, p. 80. if by our Reason we are
 “ to make trial of what is offer’d to us as a
 “ Revelation from God, then we are more
 “ especially oblig’d to make trial by our
 “ Reason of all the Parts and Branches of
 “ that Revelation, which is particularly and
 “ directly offer’d to us as such.” No such
 matter, and the Reason is obvious, because
 all the Parts of that Revelation, *viz.* those
 which are above Reason, will not admit of
 such a Trial. RATHER if the *Revelation* it-
 self upon such a Trial appears to be divine,
 certainly all the Parts of it must oblige our
 Assent,

Assent, whether they are cognizable by Reason or not; for when a God speaketh, what shall a Man reply, but *thy Servant heareth?*

—“ And, p. 82. if God has indeed vouchsafed to give a supernatural Revelation of his Will to Men, by any Individual of them, then it must needs be most admirably cultivated to answer this End, viz. the perfecting human Nature; and therefore will be readily distinguish’d from all pretended and false Revelations that are intended to answer other Purposes, by appearing to be in all its Parts, every way worthy of God as its Parent, and well adapted to answer the fore-mention’d End.” UNDOUBTEDLY. “ All the Parts of it must and will be such as my Understanding, devoid of Prejudice, Prepossession, and bias Views, will be not only capable of perceiving, but will naturally assent to.” False for the reason above-mention’d, p. 14. “ And if by my Reason I am to make trial of what is offer’d to me as a Revelation from God, p. 84. as I certainly must; then those Parts of the *Koran* (or the Bible, which is, I suppose, all a case) that I can form no definitive Judgment of,—such cannot possibly be a Revelation from him.” Certainly they may, as we have made appear already. “ If by my Reason I am to make trial of what is offered to me as a Revelation from God, and yet on a fair and unprejudic’d Trial I
“ do

“ do not reject every thing as divine Reve-
 “ lation which appears to be out of Reason’s
 “ Power to form any judgment of— then
 “ I plainly defeat the very End for which I
 “ am to make such a Trial, and must con-
 “ sequently become obnoxious to the di-
 “ vine Resentment on that account.” Just
 the contrary, for the End is plainly answer’d,
 as soon as the Revelation appears to be divine
 or not; and admitting the former, surely to
 reject any single Part of it, because it is *un-*
fathomable by the short *Line* of Reason, is
 no other than defeating the very End for
 which such a Trial was made.

The grand Query then remains, *viz.* Whe-
 ther the *Scripture* is a Revelation from God
 or not, or whether the Reason of a Deist,
 which has so often told him that the Proofs
 hitherto insisted upon in favour of this Opi-
 nion are such as he cannot possibly acquiesce
 in, has told him right or wrong. And this,
 (as I said before) can only be determin’d by
 the Proofs themselves. But now to what
 purpose should I set these before *One* who
 has declar’d, p. 2. that he *has* apply’d *himself*
in the most impartial and unprejudic’d MAN-
 NER to the *reading such Christian Writers*
 as had obtain’d the greatest Reputation both
 for sound Judgment and nervous Reasoning,
 but after all has not found whereon to rest
 the Sole of his Foot. If *Lesley*, and *Prideaux*,
Clark, and *Addison* have prevailed nothing;

is it for *one* so *inconsiderable* and *obscure* to entertain the most distant Thought of being any ways instrumental to his Conversion? Nay, what remains for me or any other to do, but to repeat what has been repeated over and over again? for which reason I have long since rank'd it among the *Moral Impossibles* to bring over a Deist by downright Strength of Argument, and conceive it a more successful way of treating with him, to set before his view a Doctrine or two, which he does assent to, and his *Reason* has persuaded him he cannot but assent to, and then leave it to others to applaud or condemn his *Reason* as they judge most convenient.

Supposing then, says *Eusebius Demonst. Evang. 1. 3. S. 3.* that our Saviour never wrought any of those Miracles that are unanimously reported of him by his Disciples (and a Deist can suppose or affirm no more) we must then suppose that they enter'd into a Covenant among themselves after this Manner: " Men and Brethren, what that Seducer
 " was that liv'd among us t'other day, and
 " how justly he suffered death for his vile
 " Imposture, we of all Men have most rea-
 " son to know; and tho' others that were
 " less intimately acquainted with him and
 " his ways of deceiving, might have some
 " Opinion of his Worth and Honesty, yet
 " we, that were the daily Companions of
 " his Conversation, saw nothing in him an-
 " swerable

“ swerable to the Greatness of his Pretences,
 “ but that his whole Design was by all the
 “ boldest Arts of Craft and Hypocrisy to get
 “ a Name in the World ; and therefore let
 “ us one and all join hands and enter into
 “ solemn Covenant among ourselves to pro-
 “ pagate the Belief of this impudent Cheat
 “ among Mankind, and to feign all manner
 “ of Lies for its Confirmation ; to swear
 “ that we saw him restore Eyes to the Blind,
 “ Ears to the Deaf and Life to the Dead ; and
 “ though it be all impudently false, yet let
 “ us confidently report it, nay, and stand to
 “ it to the last Drop of our Blood. And be-
 “ cause, after all his great and glorious Pre-
 “ tences of being no less than the Son of
 “ God, he was at last crucified as a vile Ma-
 “ lefactor, with all the Circumstances of
 “ Shame and Dishonour, we must agree a-
 “ mong ourselves upon some Lie to wipe off
 “ this Disgrace.

“ Let us therefore resolve to affirm with
 “ an undaunted Impudence, that after he was
 “ thus dishonourably crucified, the third Day
 “ he rose again, and often conversed with
 “ us in the same familiar Way, as he had
 “ always done before his Execution. But
 “ then we must be sure to stand unalterably
 “ in the Impudence of the Lie, and to per-
 “ severe to Death itself in its Assertion.
 “ For what Absurdity is there in throwing a-
 “ way ourselves for nothing ? And why should

“any Man think it hard to suffer Stripes, Racks,
 “Bonds, Imprisonments, Reproaches, Disho-
 “nours, and Death itself for no Reason at all ?
 “Let us therefore unanimously and vigorously
 “set ourselves to the Design, and with one
 “Consent agree to report such impudent Fals-
 “hoods as are of no Advantage either to our-
 “selves or to those we deceive, or to him for
 “whose sake we deceive. Neither let us be
 “content to propagate this Lie only among our
 “own Countrymen, but let us resolve to
 “spread it through all Parts of the habitable
 “World, impose new Laws upon all Nations,
 “overthrow all their old Religions, command
 “the *Romans* to quit the Gods of their An-
 “cestors, the *Greeks* to renounce the Wisdom
 “of their Philosophers, and the *Egyptians* the
 “pretended Antiquity of their Superstitions.
 “Neither will we take the pains to overthrow
 “these ancient Customs of the most polite and
 “most powerful Nations of the World, by the
 “Force of Learning or Wit or Eloquence, but
 “by the meer Authority of our crucified Master.
 “Neither will we stop here, but we will tra-
 “vel to all barbarous Nations in the World,
 “reverse all their ancient Laws, and command
 “their Obedience to a new Religion, and this
 “let us resolve to go thro’ with an undaunted
 “Courage and Resolution——for it is not an
 “ordinary Reward that we expect for our Im-
 “pudence, nor is it for vulgar Crowns and
 “Trophies that we engage ourselves in such
 “hard

“ hard and hazardous Enterprizes. No, no,
 “ we are sure to meet with the utmost Severity
 “ of the Law in all Places wherever we come,
 “ and the Truth is we deserve, it for disturbing
 “ the publick Settlement only to establish a
 “ ridiculous Cheat and Imposture. But for
 “ this who would not endure all the Torments
 “ in the World, Burning, Hanging, Behead-
 “ ing, Crucifying, and being torn in
 “ Pieces by wild Beasts? All which we must,
 “ as we will secure the Honour of the Im-
 “ postor, encounter with a chearful and resolv’d
 “ Mind. For what can be more praise-wor-
 “ thy than to abuse God and affront Man-
 “ kind to no purpose, and to reap no other
 “ Benefit from all our Labours, beside the
 “ Pleasure of vain, foolish and unprofitable
 “ Lying? And for that alone will we blas-
 “ pheme all the Religions that have been from
 “ the Beginning of the World to gain Wor-
 “ ship to a crucified Malefactor; nay we will
 “ lay down our Lives for his Reputation,
 “ notwithstanding that we know him to have
 “ been an impudent Impostor, and for that
 “ Reason is it that we honour him so high-
 “ ly, because he has put such a dishonour-
 “ able Abuse upon ourselves. Who would
 “ not do or suffer any thing for the sake
 “ of so vile a Man? Who would not un-
 “ dergo all manner of Sufferings for a
 “ Cause that himself knew to be meer Falf-
 “ hood and Forgery?—And therefore let
 “ us

“ us deceive as many as we can, and if
 “ People will not be deceived, yet how-
 “ ever, we shall some time or other enjoy
 “ the Pleasure of Suffering and perhaps of
 “ Dying for an unprofitable Lye.” — All
 this every *Deist* firmly believes; and his Reason
 has told him, that he cannot but do so.
 The Question then remaining is, Whether
 the *Reason* of a Deist can be deem'd sober,
 unbiass'd and improv'd *Reason*, or whether
 it is not apparently darken'd by vincible
 Ignorance, over-rul'd by invincible Preju-
 dice, and betray'd by corrupt Affections ;
 and this let each Man resolve for himself.

“ Indeed, says our Author, p. 25. (which
 I purposely omitted to consider here) “ were
 “ all the Prophecies that have ever been
 “ given forth by Jews, Sibyls, Christians,
 “ and others, and all the Miracles that have
 “ ever been wrought taken into the Ac-
 “ count, and consider'd either separately or
 “ collectively, they would fall short of prov-
 “ ing all the following Points, *viz.* that
 “ all those Books which constitute that Col-
 “ lection of Tracts, commonly called the Bi-
 “ ble, were written by the Persons respec-
 “ tively whose Names they bear ; that the
 “ Deity immediately dictated to and im-
 “ press'd upon the Mind of each Writer the
 “ Subject Matter contain'd therein, effectually
 “ restraining each one from mixing his
 “ own Conceptions with what had been
 “ thus dictated to him ; and that these Books
 “ have

“ have been faithfully transmitted from their
 “ respective Original Copies down to us
 “ without any Corruption, Addition, or
 “ Diminution, and consequently fall equal-
 “ ly short of proving the Scriptures to be
 “ the very Word of God.” Which is all
 very true, nor were they ever intended or af-
 firm’d by any Christian that I know of
 so to do; but they directly prove the Truth
 of the Christian Religion, which is all at
 present we contend for. For with regard
 to Miracles, * *Spinoza* himself, no mean Re-
 presentative of Infidels, confessed, that if he
 could have believ’d the Matter of Fact of
Lazarus’s being rais’d to Life again after
 he had been really dead, he would have
 given up his System of Infidelity, own’d our
 Saviour’s Mission to have been from God,
 and embrac’d the Christian Faith. Now,
 that the most inveterate Enemies of Chri-
 stianity *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, did really be-
 lieve this Miracle among the rest was wrought,
 is pretty plain from their very manner
 of Writing against them. And for ample
 Satisfaction in any one of the above Par-
 ticulars, I shall refer him to such Christian
 Writers as have purposely treated them.

We are told, p. 88. “ If a Revelation
 “ were indeed necessary to the Salvation of
 “ some, methinks it should be equally ne-
 “ cessary with regard to the Salvation of all ;
 “ for

* *Vid.* Bayle Hist. Dict. voc. *Spinoza*.

" for must not the same Reason that consti-
 " tutes its Necessity to one as a Man, be
 " equally forcible to another as such." Only
 think consistent with yourself, and you must
 give up that Thought among many others ;
 for that only is necessary to Salvation, which
 the Author of our Salvation has made so.
 Now that he has made nothing so, but what
 is in the power of every Individual to comply
 with, follows undeniably from our common
 Belief of the divine Justice and Goodness.
 From whence it is clear, that a supernatural
 Revelation cannot be necessary, with regard
 to the Salvation of those it was never vouch-
 safed to, consequently not to ALL. And for
 this very reason may our Author reply, I
 conclude, not to *any*. The Question then
 remaining, is, Whether God was under any
Obligation to propose the very same Terms
 of Salvation to all ? Or whether he is not
 fully vindicated in proposing such Terms as
 every Individual has it in his power to com-
 ply with, and are abundantly sufficient, if
 comply'd with, to make him eternally hap-
 py. And here, methinks, no Advocate for
 natural Religion, no Man that holds God to
 be an *independent* Being, can hesitate a
 single Moment.

And, p. 91. " In this common Exigence,
 " this universal Distress, where the whole
 " Species was tainted, and every Individual
 " guilty, dares Mr. *Balguy* pretend that the
 " Author

“ Author of the Gospel has thereby provided
 “ a common Help, an universal Assistance,
 “ a Resource as common and universal, as
 “ the Exigence and Distress?” Undoubtedly
 he has, for tho’ the Terms of Salvation are
 different, the Author and Finisher of Salva-
 tion is the same, even *Christ Jesus, manifested*
*indeed in * latter Times, but pre-ordain’d*
before

* Till *the Fulness of Time* should come, sufficient
 Care was taken in every Age and Nation, to encourage
 returning Sinners with the Hopes of Pardon upon Re-
 pentance. The Light of Reason and Nature indeed,
 could never have afforded them any well-grounded Ex-
 pectation of such Favour. Inexorable Justice claimed
 nothing less than perfect Obedience. But the constant
 Use of Sacrifices, which every where obtain’d, and was
 probably of divine Original, had a natural Tendency to
 inspire Men with a Belief, that the Deity would accept
 of some Atonement, some Expiation for their Crimes.
 Why else should they be taught to appease him by Sacri-
 fice? And as the Care of Providence rendered an earlier
 Revelation of the *Christian Scheme* unnecessary; so the
 Evidence of our Religion in latter Ages, became more
 unexceptionable by so long a delay of our Saviour’s com-
 ing.—Among all the Evidences of our Religion, none
 appears with a greater Lustre, than the swift and amaz-
 ing Progress of it through the World. And yet who
 will venture to say, that the Swiftnefs of its Course was
 not at all promoted by the particular *Time* of its Appear-
 ance? When many were prepared to expect, and dis-
 pos’d to receive it; when the whole Body of the Jews
 were confirm’d in their Aversion to Idols, and Worship-
 pers of the true God were found of every Nation under
 Heaven.—When Eloquence, Learning and Politeness
 were at their greatest Height, when the united Rhetorick
 of *Rome* and *Athens* conspired together to resist its Pro-
 gress: It was then the mean Disciples of a crucified
 I Master

before the Foundation of the World, 1 Pet.

2. 20. *Socrates*, 'tis true, could never believe

Master, unarmed with Power or Authority, and destitute of every human Advantage, could silence the Heathen Oracles, destroy their Temples, baffle their Philosophy, triumph over the Councils of Senates, vanquish the Force of Legions, and gain upon the whole *Roman Empire*.—We can now see the Truth of several Facts and Customs incidentally mentioned in the Gospel, confirm'd by the collateral Testimony of profane Writers, in a much greater variety than could have been expected in any former Age, there being no remote Portion of Time, we are so well acquainted with, no Period we have so distinct an Account of, as of That under the twelve first *Cæsars*.

The Time of our Saviour's Appearance was also admirably contriv'd, and adapted for the Transmission of his Doctrines to Posterity. The Language of *Greece* was then become in a manner universal, and the Knowledge of it in many Countries esteem'd a part of Education. By these Means Christians in different parts of the World, were enabled to transcribe the several Writings of the New Testament, for their own Use, or translate them for the Benefit of others. Hence arose, in a short Time, such a variety of Copies, as must effectually secure them from Corruption and render their Authority the more unquestionable in succeeding Ages.—An earlier Manifestation of our Saviour in the Flesh, as it might have taken from us several single Predictions, so it would likewise have proportionably abated the Force and Evidence arising from a View and Comparison of them all together, thro' so long a Succession of Ages, by reducing the Series, or Period of Prophecy within a shorter compass. Or could an earlier Discovery of our Religion have left this Evidence in all its Force, yet still a Revelation given in any former Age would not have carried with it such full Conviction of its Expediency, because we could not in any former Age have had so many

lieve in him of whom he had never heard ;
 but *Socrates* may be sav'd thro' his Merits,
 whose Efficacy is confin'd to no Period of
 Time, no Distance of Place. "What! pro-
 ceeds he, p. 93. all need a super-natural
 Revelation, and but some have it ! Would
 he who created us but to communicate
 Happiness to us, refuse the necessary Means
 of it to some for no other Reason but
 unreasonable Will? and from the same
 preposterous Motive confer it on others?
 Does such a Representation of the divine
 Conduct consist with the Notion of Pater-
 nal Benevolence in infinite Perfection, and
 that unlimited and impartial Regard to the
 Happiness of all his rational Creatures, that
 must be supposed from the Consideration
 of this Attribute to reside in the Deity?"
 And to whom are we indebted for such a
 Representation? I am sure, not one of
 those you have taken so unbecoming a
 Freedom with, not a single rational Per-
 son beside: No, *Thou*, and thou only,
art the Man.

If it should be said after all, that we
 rest the whole Matter upon Human Testi-
 mony, and Human Testimony is *fallible*, we
 agree with you. But it is *therefore* never to
 be

many flagrant Instances of the deficiency of human Rea-
 son in the Concerns of Religion.

Mr. *Cleaver's* Sermon on *Gal.* iv. 4. before the Uni-
 versity of *Oxford.*

be depended upon, or only not in the present Case? If never, let me insist upon his never mentioning *Socrates and others of old* again; if only not in the present Case, his ruling Principle is evident, and we need seek no farther. And whoever rejects the Notion of a *Revelation* from God, because it does not carry with it such Evidence as the thing itself is incapable of, must be held equally ridiculous with him who should reject the Notion of *Wind*, and seriously affirm there was no such thing, because he could not possibly see it. Nor would he be much less trifling, who should look to cut off all occasion of Dispute from them that desire occasion, and when they have found it, rejoice as one that findeth great Spoils, *sporting themselves in their own Deceivings*.



FINIS.



